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explore

PUBLISHED BY THE IGNATIAN CENTER AT SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

AN EXAMINATION
OF CATHOLIC
IDENTITY AND
IGNATIAN
CHARACTER IN
JESUIT HIGHER
EDUCATION

SPRING 2006 VOL. 9 NO. 2

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**Santa Clara
University**

The Ignatian Center for
Jesuit Education



SPRING 2006

explore

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SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

FROM THE CENTER DIRECTOR

The word “immersion” has several different meanings in the dictionary. The one that most directly fits the use of the word in this volume of **explore** is “...complete attention and intense mental effort.” Certainly, immersion experiences challenge participants to call on all their concentration to adapt to the unfamiliar experiences they must confront. Taking it all in taxes the entirety of one’s resources, leaving one most exhausted by the end of the day.

Another meaning of the word immersion is from astronomy, but it seems metaphorically accurate: “...the disappearance of a body before an eclipse.” Throughout this issue, you will see descriptions of immersion experiences as though something had to disappear before transformation. Clearly, old bodies of thought, preconceptions about the poor, and the mindset of consumerism must give way before a new worldview can take shape.

Finally, one finds the baptismal connotations of the word “immersion” involving water, purification, and the initiation into a community. Although it would be going much too far to allege that immersions take the place of the holy sacrament of baptism, again the metaphor seems apt. This issue of **explore** is filled with narratives speaking to the realization that one is part of a larger, more inclusive human family. In that sense, immersion experiences are good preparation for the journey from Jerusalem to Jericho. Recall, it was the Good Samaritan who traveled that road.

Peace,

DENNIS J. MOBERG
Interim Director, Ignatian Center

Dennis Moberg
Interim Executive Director

Paul Woolley
Associate Director

Elizabeth Kelley Gillogly '93
Managing Editor

Amy Kremer Gomersall '88
Design

Ignatian Center Advisory Board

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Joseph Symkowick

Catherine Wolff

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The views expressed in **explore** do not necessarily represent the views of the center. We welcome your comments.

Founded in 1982, the Ignatian Center, one of four Centers of Distinction at Santa Clara University, assists in maintaining the University's Catholic and Jesuit character. The center offers grants for faculty, staff, and students. It sponsors retreats, lectures, and conferences, and brings religious scholars and leaders to the University to engage in educational activities.

Santa Clara University, a comprehensive Jesuit, Catholic university located in California's Silicon Valley, offers its 8,047 students rigorous undergraduate curricula in arts and sciences, business, and engineering, plus master's and law degrees. Distinguished nationally by the fourth-highest graduation rate among all U.S. master's universities, California's oldest higher-education institution demonstrates faith-inspired values of ethics and social justice. More information is online at www.scu.edu

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To Fall in Love and to be Transformed:

The History and Development
of Immersion Experiences at SCU



BY CATHERINE WOLFF

*Former Director, Arrupe Center,
Santa Clara University*

**GERDENIO "SONNY"
MANUEL, S.J.**

*Rector, Jesuit Community, and Associate
Professor, Psychology Department,
Santa Clara University*

"WHEN THE HEART IS TOUCHED BY DIRECT EXPERIENCE, THE MIND MAY BE CHALLENGED TO CHANGE. PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WITH INNOCENT SUFFERING, WITH THE INJUSTICE OTHERS SUFFER, IS THE CATALYST FOR SOLIDARITY WHICH THEN GIVES RISE TO INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY AND MORAL REFLECTION."

Fr. Hans-Peter Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, spoke these words in an address at the 2000 Justice Conference at SCU. He was drawing on a long Jesuit tradition, one that was evident in the 16th century, when Jesuit education was already distinguished by a special concern for the poor, and an emphasis on character formation, in a network that was international but involved in outreach to local situations of poverty¹.

The history and development of immersion experiences here at Santa Clara University is a contemporary manifestation of these essential

ideals. A full account of this history thus requires not only a chronology of trips and programs, but of the deep and fundamental influence of immersions on individuals, the University, and the community.

A call from then-Superior General Pedro Arrupe in 1966 to Jesuit provincials in Latin America can be seen as an early impetus for our immersion efforts. Arrupe expressed his concern that the socio-economic situation throughout the continent contradicted the Gospel, and presented "the moral obligation of the Society to rethink its ministries and every form of its apostolates to see if they really offer a response to the urgent priorities which justice and social equity call for."² In 1973, Arrupe declared that the prime educational objective for Jesuits must be to form men and women for others, and in 1975 the 32nd General Congregation established as the integrating factor for all the Society's works the service of faith united with the promotion of justice.

These messages were further articulated directly to us at Santa Clara by University of Central America president Ignacio Ellacuria, S.J., in his 1982 graduation speech: “A Christian university must take into account the Gospel preference for the poor... the university should not abdicate its mission of academic excellence—excellence needed in order to solve complex social problems. ...the university should be present intellectually where it is needed: to provide science for those who have no science, to provide skills for the unskilled; to be a voice for those who do not possess the academic qualifications to promote and legitimate their rights.”

It was during this time that Santa Clara University was invited by the president of Jamaica, Michael Manley, to establish a summer program for SCU students in Kingston. In 1983 and 1984 the Political Science Department and Campus Ministry collaborated in a program involving academic study, a community-based-learning placement, and reflections to integrate students’ experiences. Toward the end of the decade, the dire situation in El Salvador called for a different kind of immersion. In 1988, during the civil war, a group of California Province Jesuits was invited by a Salvadoran priest, Jon Cortina, S.J., to join refugees in Desperar, who felt safer when they were being observed by American and Europeans who could bear witness to their plight to the outside world. In 1989, immediately following the murders of Ellacuria, five other Jesuits and two co-workers at the University of Central America in San Salvador, Eastside Project founders Steve Privett, S.J., and Sonny Manuel, S.J., traveled to El Salvador. All Jesuits there were in hiding, so Privett and Manuel disguised themselves as Coldwell Banker executives, and smuggled out videotapes of the murder victims. In March 1990, then-academic vice-president Paul Locatelli, S.J., led a delegation of faculty,

regents, and friends of the University to tour refugee camps and to participate in ceremonies marking the tenth anniversary of the martyrdom of Bishop Oscar Romero. They brought with them Jon Sobrino, S.J., a UCA professor who had escaped assassination, in order to ensure his safe re-entry into El Salvador. Throughout this tense time, SCU’s Eastside Project, with Jesuit Refugee Services, was operating a human rights advocacy network whereby telegrams demanding to know the whereabouts of missing people were signed by University officials and sent to the highest U.S. and Salvadoran officials.

Still vivid in the memory of those who took part, these early El Salvador immersions were all

Wood wrote movingly of its multi-dimensional richness “...it was a research and fact-finding trip to animate courses and scholarly work, but also to find the truth and to hear good news; to encounter people who were ignored, devalued, rejected, excluded, not to help, but to fall in love...and to be transformed.”

about witness to extraordinary people and times: the Jesuit martyrs, the heroic struggle of the Salvadoran people and of those who persevered in the work of social change. A visit to a place in crisis became a way of forming bridges between cultures, of channeling grace to live in solidarity with the people we met along the way. This form of witness characterized the immersions, though they varied in mission and in destination, over the next decade. The 1992 immersion aimed “to investigate the role of the Christian churches and the struggle for peace and justice in El Salvador,” and whether guarantees in the peace accords regarding

human rights were being fulfilled. By this time, immersion delegations comprised of representatives from SCU and other local entities were being sponsored by the Eastside Project and led by Colombian Jesuit Luis Calero, S.J., who had come to SCU specifically to educate people about contemporary Central America. In his statement regarding the 1993 delegation, Calero added dimensions to the immersion experience that would become increasingly important in its development: “The delegation’s role is to educate, through direct experience, faculty, staff,

Still vivid in the memory of those who took part, these early El Salvador immersions were all about witness to extraordinary people and times: the Jesuit martyrs, the heroic struggle of the Salvadoran people and of those who persevered in the work of social change. A visit to a place in crisis became a way of forming bridges between cultures, of channeling grace to live in solidarity with the people we met along the way.

and students on the harsh reality of El Salvador and, through it, about the Third World. It is hoped that this experience is brought back to campus and community, and later integrated in a number of ways: writing, teaching, lectures, and group work.” Reflecting the commitment of the University to a deeper awareness of social responsibility and to education models that inspire active participation in social change, this statement also acknowledged the necessity for all sectors of the University community to be included. To this day, faculty, staff, and student representatives are chosen from the spectrum of academic disciplines on the basis of leadership ability, influential roles on campus, and potential to involve others.

Following the El Salvador peace accords, and a 1994 delegation sent to witness the first Salvadoran national election, Bill Wood, S.J., director of the Eastside Project, expanded the range of immersion delegations. University representatives were sent in 1994 to Haiti to investigate its situation following the restoration of President Aristide, and in 1995 to Chiapas at the urging of Bishop Ruiz of San Cristobal, who believed that their witness would help to keep the indigenous population safe from military brutality. Wood wrote movingly of its multi-dimensional richness “...it was a research and fact-finding trip to animate courses and scholarly work, but also to find the truth and to hear good news; to encounter people who were ignored, devalued, rejected, excluded, not to help, but to fall in love...and to be transformed.”

Over the next three years, the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, through the International Human Rights and Migration Program, took over sponsorship of immersion trips, which now focused on Guatemala. Similar to their earlier efforts in El Salvador, SCU delegations investigated the reconstruction of civil society after the 1994-96 peace accords, and the crucial role of the Church in the Recovery of Historic Memory which to this day seeks reconciliation and healing for victims of nearly four decades of civil conflict. These trips inspired projects involving affordable housing and computer sharing, and articles and presentations on restorative justice. In 1999, a SCU group returned to El Salvador, and another, back under Eastside Project auspices, participated in the 20th anniversary commemoration of Romero’s martyrdom.

It was during this time that Sonny Manuel, S.J., then recently appointed vice-provost, directed Bill Spohn from the Bannan Institute and Catherine Wolff from the Eastside Project to review the status and usefulness of immersion experiences, with the intention of establishing them as a permanent University-sponsored program and a collaborative effort between the two entities. We called a meeting of alumni of immersion delegations that immediately convinced us of the efficacy of the immersion experience. Not only did nearly all those still on campus attend, but there was near-unanimity on several key points: these experiences had made a powerful and lasting personal impact, and should be made available to as many members

of the campus community as possible; they should be constructed so as to establish relationships between people and institutions which are sustainable and reciprocal; and finally, the group strongly advised us to set up a structure that would provide resources and support for the deep urge people felt after coming home to do something, to pursue a project rooted in the immersion experience. It was clear to us all that their immersion experience had caused these individuals to become leaven to the University and the wider community, that the education and personal transformation they had undergone had great potential for bringing about change at home, whether through academic, civic, or personal efforts.

These were fertile times for such work here at Santa Clara. A national process had been conducted by the Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S. to explore the integration of justice into curriculum and research. In 2000, SCU hosted the national conference where Kolvenbach's address laid out the mission for the future: "As Jesuit higher education, we embrace new ways of learning and being formed in the pursuit of adult solidarity; new methods of researching and teaching in an academic community of dialogue,

and a new university way of practicing faith-justice in society." Students need an encounter with the "gritty reality of this world...so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively."³ It was becoming clear to us that in order to bring about such transforming education for our students, we educators needed to undergo such an encounter. This came to be the fundamental rationale, along with Kolvenbach's directives, for the subsequent development of faculty and staff immersion programs.

There were significant challenges, as the late Bill Spohn pointed out at the close of the justice conference: "First, we must continue to guarantee that justice initiatives on our campuses are moved beyond the margins and integrated into the core of what it means to be a university, into our research and teaching. Secondly, we need to develop our understanding of the faith(s) that undergird or impede our discussions of justice." In direct response, support for faculty/staff and student immersions was designated as a formal goal by both Eastside Project and Bannan Center, which hired community partner Mary Novak to incorporate immersion into its faculty development. New initiatives were taken



"Man With Shovel, La Chacra, 2004"

Dean Brackley, S.J., an American Jesuit who went to work in El Salvador in response to the order's call to replace the murdered UCA professors, speaks of our being part of a "middle-class tribe" that is mistaken, and trapped, in a belief in our own centrality, and of the necessity for us to allow those who are poor and suffering to break apart our world. It is in allowing this to happen that we can be reconciled with the poor majority of people, and be taught by them about God's transforming work in the world.

to involve participants from all disciplines, as well as community partners, to provide more background information and opportunities for reflection, and to encourage and facilitate follow-ups such as reunions, course redesign, and community service projects. Follow-up activities have purposely not been defined, in recognition that immersion affects participants in highly individual, often unexpected ways. There has been in the ensuing years a wide range of such efforts, with participants setting up scholarship funds, team-teaching a Latin American social justice film course, and assuming responsibility for directing the Eastside Community Law Center. These efforts have grown in some cases into full-fledged partnerships, as in 2004-05, when faculty and students in the engineering school collaborated in sustainable engineering designs produced jointly with UCA students.

There were other indications during this time that immersions were increasingly recognized as essential to SCU's ideal of integrated education for justice. The 1998 strategic plan called for "reflective engagement with society, and a commitment to fashioning a more humane and just world." In 2001, the Eastside Project was named a Center of Distinction and was charged in that year's strategic plan to "expand community-based learning programs through the Pedro Arrupe, S.J. Center for Community-Based Learning (and) root them more strongly in the curriculum." President Locatelli's convocation addresses from 1997 on have explored core values that are directly addressed by immersion

programming: integrated education, the pedagogy of engagement, justice in Jesuit education, globalization. In 2003 the president himself traveled with a group of his top-level administrators to El Salvador.

In 2002 and 2003, collaboration between the Bannan Center, the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus, and the Jesuits in Colombia resulted in faculty/staff and student delegations traveling there, to investigate the effects of American foreign policy and to explore possibilities for educational exchange. However the volatile social and political situation made further endeavors too dangerous.

There was, then, a deliberate return in this decade to El Salvador as the permanent site for faculty/staff immersions. Politically and socially, it constitutes a microcosm of human conditions, and our rich common history has resulted in a network of relationships with individuals and groups working in El Salvador who mediate for visitors their experience of working with the poor and sharing in the history of Romero, the Jesuit martyrs, and the Salvadoran people. Dean Brackley, S.J., an American Jesuit who went to work in El Salvador in response to the order's call to replace the murdered UCA professors, speaks of our being part of a "middle-class tribe" that is mistaken, and trapped, in a belief in our own centrality, and of the necessity for us to allow those who are poor and suffering to break apart our world. It is in allowing this to happen that we can be reconciled with the poor majority of people, and be taught by them about God's

transforming work in the world. (Brackley 1999 article) Professor Rob Brancatelli, veteran of several visits to El Salvador, has written of becoming “social property,” which involves sharing rather than solving the problems of the poor, in the process moving the Self toward the Other, and in doing so, paradoxically, discovering the Self in a new way.⁴ This path of accompaniment reflects a new way to be in relationship to others, as Dean Brackley says, of “being differently.” It constitutes a sea-change not only in our sense of self but in our sense of mission as well, as we have seen in returning immersion participants devising concrete, practical ways of expressing their solidarity with the struggling people they have encountered.

Parallel to the rapid development and institutionalization of the faculty/staff immersion program in these years was that of student immersions. Students themselves had been organizing service projects in Mexico for years, and interest in El Salvador and other parts of the world was growing. On hearing that the Jesuit Community had made a generous gift to Eastside Project in 2000, Frank Kreikebaum, Director of Santa Clara Community Action Project, requested that the money be used to fund summer projects combining aspects of immersion and community service for which students were seeking funding. Eastside Project accordingly founded the Jean Donovan Summer Fellowship, named in honor of the young laywoman murdered along with three co-workers in El Salvador in 1980. The students were also exploring possibilities for alternative spring breaks, and began organizing immersions to Guarjila, El Salvador. Their initiatives resulted in rich learning opportunities, and it was clear that the University needed to provide both academic and personal support. For three years a course in praxis theology was offered for students participating in immersions over spring break, a course providing background informa-

tion, skills for critical analysis, and personal reflection on their experiences, as well as support for post-trip projects.

Finally, there were formal efforts to address institutional support for student immersions following the 2000 justice conference, the goal of a committee of student leaders under Provost Denise Carmody. This led to formation of a council of faculty, staff, and student representatives from the Center for Student Leadership, the Arrupe Center, Campus Ministry, International Programs, and other campus entities that met over 2001-02 to establish a home base, resources, and risk-management guidelines for student immersions. The council explored ways to refine the

key elements of informational and personal preparation, integration with academic pursuits, and follow-up activities, and Michael Colyer was brought on board at the Arrupe and Bannan Centers to implement their recommendations. Since 2000, due in large part to the generous support of the DISCOVER program funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., more than 900 students have participated in thoughtfully facilitated immersion experiences from San Jose to Tijuana, from New Orleans to Immokalee. And in 2005, the University entered into a formal partner-

ship with Catholic Relief Services that opens up potential immersion sites around the world.

During these same years, Santa Clara University, at the urging of Dean Brackley, S.J., and in partnership with the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, founded the Casa de la Solidaridad, seen by Steve Privett, S.J. as the paradigmatic student immersion program. Fr. Privett, Kevin and Trena Yonkers-Talz, former volunteers from JVC, and Dennis Gordon of International Studies, drawing on resources from the provost, International Studies, and the Bannan Center, established the Casa, a one-semester academic program integrating academic coursework at the UCA with community-based learn-



“Woman Selling Juice, Mercado Centrale, 2004”

David Pace


Santa Clara University has come a long way, and is indeed unique in American higher education for its support of the value for faculty and staff, as well as for students, of immersion experiences, and of the way in which they can educate and transform not only individuals but the communities to which they return.

ing placements, and open to students from Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S. Having refurbished an abandoned convent on the edge of the UCA campus, Kevin and Trena welcomed their first group of students in the fall of 2000. The program has flourished, and to this day has served 156 students from 14 Jesuit institutions.

Santa Clara University has come a long way, and is indeed unique in American higher education for its support of the value for faculty and staff, as well as for students, of immersion experiences, and of the way in which they can educate and transform not only individuals but the communities to which they return. To date, more than 150 faculty and staff members have participated in immersions, and President Locatelli is firmly committed to expanding these opportunities as the prime mode of educating for solidarity. He is also realistic about our challenges as we move forward: in the mindset of faculty members as to what it means to be educated, in the professional reward system and patterns of allegiance, in the culture of academic institutions themselves, and finally in securing adequate resources to ensure improvement and sustainability.

However, in the testimony of those who have returned to their work here at Santa Clara charged with a sense of mission, who find themselves rethinking their courses or their guidance of students to include personal and academic considerations of justice and solidarity, we find the assurance that immersions will continue to grow in number and in influence. Wherever we have visited, we have met people eager to tell us their stories, stories of suffering and hardship that become comprehensible only through their generosity in sharing them with us. As Profes-

sor Diane Jonte-Pace realized in her time in El Salvador last year, these stories are the only monuments to suffering and heroism possible for impoverished peoples.

Each of us who has heard them carries these stories with us. They bore holes in our hearts that fill up with memories and grace. We remember years ago visiting the site of the 1980 martyrdom of Jean Donovan and her friends with another Maryknoll sister who had not been with them that awful day. Sister Terry, funny, serene, not a day under seventy, led us to a stand of trees in full blue flower planted on the site of their martyrdom, and then into a small chapel built in their memory. We opened up broad windows on either side to let in fresh air and sat in the pews as she told of their work together, of her being forced to leave the country after their death, of her prayers to return, and of the work she carries on to this day among the people of whom she is now one. An afternoon breeze was stirring, and as we sat listening to her story, an abundance of blue blossoms drifted through the windows, showering down on us like blessings. 

FOOTNOTES

¹ Joseph Daoust, SJ, "Of Kingfishers and Dragonflies: Faith and Justice at the Core of Jesuit Education," Santa Clara Lecture, Santa Clara University; October 15, 1999, Vol. 6, No. 1.

² Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Higher Education," Santa Clara Lecture, Santa Clara University; October 6, 2000, Vol. 7, No. 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rob Brancatelli, Perspectives; Bulletin of the Department of Religious Studies; Santa Clara University; Spring 2001.

The Student's Struggle for Solidarity:

How does immersion impact our students?



BY KEVIN YONKERS-TALZ
*Director of SCU's
Casa de Solidaridad program*

"WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?" MAGGIE, JUST BACK FROM A SEMESTER AT CASA DE LA SOLIDARIDAD, ASKS THE QUESTION VIA EMAIL TO THOSE WHO WERE HER CLASSMATES AT CASA. AN INTENSIVE STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE IN EL SALVADOR SPONSORED BY SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY, CASA INTEGRATES IMMERSION WITH THE POOR AND RIGOROUS ACADEMICS. "My family is great," she says. "They've been taking really good care of me and the zoo that I brought back inside my stomach. But it's turning out to be harder to talk to old friends than I thought." Like many of her Casa classmates, Maggie is struggling to understand what she experienced there. What is the answer to her question? What *did* happen to her?

In "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education," a speech delivered at Santa Clara University on October 6, 2000, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, said, "The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become." At Casa we asked, how are we going to know who our students become unless we keep in touch with them in a

systematic way over time? That led us to begin a longitudinal research project on their development. While it is still young—it started in 2001—I would like to share some of the initial insights; I presented them in October at the Justice in Jesuit Higher Education Conference at John Carroll University.

Currently there are 65 students in the project. I interview them at the beginning and the end of the Casa experience, and annually afterward. I ask them about their beliefs and values, their sense of themselves and who they're becoming, and their relationships.¹

We have learned a great deal from the interviews and from the lived experience of accompanying these students over the last six years. Living in a different culture and being exposed to people living in poverty creates a great deal of dissonance for our students. Their values and beliefs, their sense of self and their relationships are challenged. To foster their development in the face of these challenges, it is necessary to provide them with a great deal of support, both personal and communal.

The literature on human development indicates that most college students are asking the fundamental questions: Who am I? Where

Living in a different culture and being exposed to people living in poverty creates a great deal of dissonance for our students. Their values and beliefs, their sense of self and their relationships are challenged. To foster their development in the face of these challenges, it is necessary to provide them with a great deal of support, both personal and communal.

do I fit into this world? What are my beliefs and values? What kind of relationships do I want to have? We have found that these questions get tweaked differently in Casa's unique context. They are explored more intentionally and deeply when, for example, students come to know parents who cannot afford to send their children to school, and who live in poverty along the railroad tracks in a slum neighborhood. To better understand how this experience impacts their development, let us consider the story of Jackie, a Casa alumnus who spoke about the time she spent teaching—and learning—in a public school in Las Brisas, a poor community in the Salvadoran countryside:

"It has forced me to look at the way I live and what I want to do with my future. Now things are not as cut and dried as I thought they would be because now *I have been exposed to the reality of the poor* [emphasis added]. I had never experienced that before...But now I have a lot of thinking to do about what I am going to do with my future. It has been a challenge and a wonderful challenge and life changing," she said.

Jackie was asked, "How have you changed?"

"[In] the way I look at things. Before, I read the newspaper but I didn't take into account my part in it. Now I realize I do have a say, for example, in the policies of our government. I never really took an interest in it. Now I look at things through different eyes. Things I do and even things I buy, things I say, even just talking with people. And on the big level of what I am going to do with my life... I have been saying over and over that the people are not just numbers anymore. The poor are no longer just statistics.

They have names and faces. They are friends," she said.

Jackie's view of the world and the way she made sense of it changed during her time in El Salvador. Everything seems more complex than before, and knowledge is not so "cut and dried." Her experience with the poor, and her attempts to see the world from their vantage point, encouraged and almost obliged Jackie to rethink her old assumptions about herself, the world, and her role in it. To accomplish this—in effect, to begin transforming her identity—she needed support. She found that support in the Casa's living-and-learning community. It provided a safe reflective space where she didn't feel judged when she expressed her opinion, and where she felt comfortable about questioning her values, beliefs, and relationships:

"[Going to El Salvador] was very scary because I was coming down here not knowing anybody. But it has been unbelievable. I mean the individual relationships with people. You go through such a meaningful experience with somebody and then you are bonded to them.... The whole community has been very open to not judging each other and laughing at our mistakes and teasing each other. It has really been a wonderful experience," said Jackie.

A year after leaving Casa, Jackie was asked, "What is your sense of yourself?"

"I started discovering ... when I was at the Casa... that I'm not what other people think of me... I am what I am, and how other people perceive me doesn't worry me as much anymore...It is ... an individual process of finding out who you are. It is not always just people tell-

Charles Barry



Charles Barry



Charles Barry



Top left, Erin Bishop '03 laughs with a member of the youth group in Guarjila, El Salvador, as they tour a community radio station. Top right, Joe Albers '02 spends time with one of the members of the youth group in Guarjila, El Salvador. Bottom, Erin Bishop '03, Maribeth Blaymaier '02, and Ty Fitzgerald '01 reflect on their weeklong spring break immersion in El Salvador as local school children stop by on their way home.

Her experience with the poor, and her attempts to see the world from their vantage point, encouraged and almost obliged Jackie to rethink her old assumptions about herself, the world, and her role in it. To accomplish this—in effect, to begin transforming her identity—she needed support. She found that support in the Casa’s living-and-learning community. It provided a safe reflective space where she didn’t feel judged when she expressed her opinion, and where she felt comfortable about questioning her values, beliefs, and relationships.

ing you who you are. You have to do it on your own,” said Jackie.


In addition to better understanding the perspectives and realities of the poor, Jackie came to discover that she can be, and indeed wants to be, the author of her life.

Let us conclude by turning our attention back to Maggie. In her *praxis* seminar at Casa, she reflected on the meaning of solidarity:

From my experience at Mariona [the *praxis* site where she spent two days each week] and from living in El Salvador, I have come to see solidarity as a way to cross cultural divides in understanding. I do not feel that it is a necessary part of solidarity to throw down the culture that you have always considered “home.” Rather, the appreciation and understanding of solidarity make room for all cultures by putting above all else a caring for the human condition... To live in solidarity is to move outside the box of oblivious comfort into the knowledge of human suffering and not to forget it. [Not forgetting it] is what the Jesuits are talking about when they use the phrase “ruined for life.” It is the realization that you can no longer ... go back and live as you used to [S]olidarity forces a breakdown of the rigidity of your culture, of what you had considered “natural” or “home.” This is the discomfort of solidarity. It changes your way of life, the way you see your home and your dreams... To be in solidarity is to use your life and privilege as an instrument of caring to help pull up the poor.

During my time in Mariona, I learned to walk alongside the Salvadoran people and opened myself to learn from them. I have seen the suffering of the poor and learned from their generosity... I have allowed my heart to break, my life to be ruined. This does not mean that I am downtrodden and depressed; it just means that I have traded in my old way for a new one. So it is that I am on my way, but there is still much more to come and much I have left to choose.

Given the nature of Maggie’s experience, it is no wonder that, having returned home, she continues to struggle with what is happening to her. Hopefully she will continue to make sense of that experience—ideally with the support of a community—and continue to delve into the answer to her question.

The hope for Maggie, Jackie, and the other students is that, after leaving Casa, they will continue becoming the authors of their lives and developing an identity and a coherent belief system. If they can do that, they’ll be better able to engage our world critically and effectively as true global citizens. 

FOOTNOTES

¹ An extensive overview of the research can be found in Yonkers-Talz, K. “A Learning Partnership: U.S. College Students and the Poor in El Salvador” in Baxter Magolda, M. B. & King, P.M. (Eds.) (2004). *Learning Partnerships: Theory and Models of Practice to Educate for Self-Authorship*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Faculty and Staff Immersions at Santa Clara

Bringing Jesuit Education into Partnership with the Poor of the World



BY LUIS CALERO, S.J.

*Bannan Senior Fellow,
Ignatian Center for
Jesuit Education,
and Associate Professor,
Department of Anthropology,
Santa Clara University*

IN RECENT YEARS, STUDENT IMMERSION TRIPS HAVE BECOME COMMON PRACTICE IN CENTERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THEY ARE SEEN AS EFFECTIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT ALLOW PARTICIPANTS TO ADDRESS DISCIPLINARY AND HUMAN QUESTIONS WHILE SPENDING TIME IN PERSONAL CONTACT WITH MARGINAL POPULATIONS. In the face of widespread and dehumanizing global poverty, students gain a deeper understanding of social problems, are able to question their own assumptions, and examine roles they may play as they look into the future.

While student immersions have gained momentum in college education, faculty and staff immersions still have a long way to go. This may not seem surprising given the fact that colleges and universities are concerned primarily with student education and growth, not faculty and staff development. There is, however, a recognized need to provide all members of a

university community, not just students, with systematic developmental opportunities that go beyond disciplinary and professional training. One reason for this, I suggest, is that there is a direct connection between who the educators are—not only what they know—and who the students become. Clearly, faculty members function as instructors of specialized knowledge, but also as mentors and role models for the young. If education is to be more than a costly ticket to professional success, we need to make sure that those involved in education are offered opportunities to broaden their global perspectives in order to engage students not only as subject learners but also as responsible citizens.

At Santa Clara, individuals who join immersions come from a wide range of disciplines, programs, and occupations at the university. We travel together to developing countries in order to learn about the human conditions in various regions as we come into direct contact with the poor and those who work with them. Participants are selected by nomination or simply by expressing interest in participating. Selection cri-

There is a direct connection between who the educators are—not only what they know—and who the students become. Clearly, faculty members function as instructors of specialized knowledge, but also as mentors and role models for the young. If education is to be more than a costly ticket to professional success, we need to make sure that those involved in education are offered opportunities to broaden their global perspectives in order to engage students not only as subject learners but also as responsible citizens.

teria include a reasonable time of affiliation with Santa Clara, full-time status, demonstrated skills as a campus leader, and a desire to explore the Ignatian tradition of working for the common good and social justice. One must be willing to challenge oneself to see the world through the eyes of those we meet and who in fact represent the majority of humankind. It is an invitation to see the world literally from the other side, to gain an inside perspective of what is like to be poor.

Santa Clara has been a pioneer among Jesuit institutions in promoting faculty and staff immersions. Beginning in the early 1990s, it began to programmatically offer trips to economically poor regions such as Haiti, Mexico, Central and South America. We have used different names for these trips: delegations, fact-finding tours, immersions. Whatever the term we use, the experience has always been about learning from and about the poor. More than 150 Santa Clara faculty and staff have benefited from this experience thus far, and each year's trip adds approximately 10 new participants.

During the last few years, immersions have focused on El Salvador, a country that presents a microcosm of developments around the world in the age of globalization. The choice of El Salvador has been deliberate. In good measure it reflects Santa Clara's close institutional connections to the country at large and to the Jesuit

University in San Salvador in particular. In addition, the fact that Santa Clara has a very successful study-abroad program located there ("Casa de Solidaridad") constitutes a strong added incentive. El Salvador is a place of rich Jesuit history where Santa Clara has made a substantial human and financial investment.

Contemporary guidelines on Jesuit higher education emphasize the role of experiential learning. When the head of the Jesuit Order, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, spoke at Santa Clara in the fall of 2000, he highlighted the key role of personal contact with marginal populations as indispensable in the learning process. This contact, he said, would help us understand critically the state of affairs in a world in crisis and inspire us to deal knowledgeably and compassionately with the future.

Immersion participants have rarely experienced poverty or life in the slums firsthand. Most of us are not personally aware of the problems associated with extreme poverty. Nor are we knowledgeable about how economic policies and lifestyles in industrialized nations are structurally connected to global poverty. During the 8 to 10 days that the immersion lasts, we carry out a varied program that includes a visit to the slums, trips to the countryside, and conversations with academics, peasants, political figures, religious leaders, and members of the business class. In what often becomes a reality check, we gradu-

ally learn to see life through the eyes of others. It is certainly different from sitting in the faculty club discussing such matters.

The structure of a successful immersion depends on a number of variables. It requires adequate preparation, a carefully thought-out agenda, time for individual and group reflection, and follow-up upon return. Daily group reflection during the trip constitutes a crucial activity since the experience itself is quite unsettling and provides much food for thought. Each day, usually toward the end of the day, the group spends time sorting out observations and feelings which typically run very deep. We listen to each other and try to make sense of new data which up to that point was largely unknown to us. It can be, and usually is, a difficult but necessary soul-searching exercise. Group reflection provides the interpretative key through which the immersion is organized.

As a result of these experiences, a relationship of mutuality is established between visitors

and the local population. In what theologian Gustavo Gutierrez calls “the eruption of the poor into our consciousness,” the group gains a different way of perceiving social reality: participants see themselves personally connected to a world that is vastly different from their own. It feels like a great tectonic movement, a re-arrangement of the personal cognitive plates in which one’s personal landscape is shaken and significantly altered.

Immersion evaluations speak clearly of the multi-layered transformation that occurs, of a vision that has been broadened, and of the joy and sorrow that give birth to a qualitatively different understanding of one’s priorities in life. Each member articulates the benefits of such experiences in a uniquely personal manner. All seem to deeply desire to reduce the inequality that fragments the world into the privileged and the miserable. There is a strong realization among participants that they have learned together and have also been transformed together. There is a



SCU professors Mark Ravizza, S.J. (philosophy), at left, and Ron Hansen (English), at right, talk with families in temporary housing outside of San Salvador after their homes were destroyed by earthquakes in 2001. Kevin Yonkers-Talz, director of SCU’s Casa de Solidaridad program, center, is serving as translator.


Charles Barry

Ultimately the experience invites us to be more deeply human, and to exercise our humanity right here and now in our places of work. Faculty and staff immersions remind us of something we already know but often forget: that we must constantly re-examine the parameters that shape our reality in order to see the world as it really is.

sense of community and bonding that gradually emerges in the group. Many speak of these trips as a high point of their own history at Santa Clara, a rich and valuable time with colleagues and friends with whom they have interacted for years but only now have gotten to know.

People ask how participants integrate this experience into life at Santa Clara, once we return to campus. Changes are not always easy to track, but they occur at both personal and professional levels. Personally, individuals speak of value and belief system changes, of a different perspective for understanding the world in which they live. They describe their transformation as having a better sense of the structural forces underlying social problems. Participants experience political, moral, and intellectual transformation. Many talk about rethinking their lifestyle, changing the course of their careers, deepening their spiritual selves. Images of the experience accompany participants for months, sometimes years. It becomes difficult to ignore women at a sweatshop receiving \$154 a month, children who have to work at an early age, and peasants who cannot compete with international prices of corn “adjusted” by the International Monetary Fund. There is a sense of bonding with the larger human family and a desire to live a life that expresses solidarity with the disenfranchised of the world. There is often a qualitative shift in how immersion participants understand the nature and use of knowledge—we all realize that knowledge calls for personal commitment and action.

Professionally speaking, participants find many creative ways to bring their experience into their workplace—in teaching, writing, administration, and office work. Some make curricular changes in their courses, or design new courses that allow them to bring their discipline closer to “the real world.” Others undertake new and challenging responsibilities in their departments and programs at the University. A few return to the immersion sites, this time on their own, to nurture and expand relationships with newly found friends. Still others create artistic productions on campus that illustrate what they have gained from this experience—employing music, poetry, photography to share what they have learned.

Ultimately the experience invites us to be more deeply human, and to exercise our humanity right here and now in our places of work. Faculty and staff immersions remind us of something we already know but often forget: that we must constantly re-examine the parameters that shape our reality in order to see the world as it really is. We realize that we need to critically transcend cultural norms, to think of ourselves as connected to others, and to take more seriously our rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It is easy to succumb to social apathy and to prevailing consumer values in a world of abundance and material prosperity. Immersions awaken in us a realization that we are inhabitants of the global village, and that our mission at Santa Clara cannot be separated from the welfare of the rest of the world. 

Impact of Immersion Trips on the Local Communities



**JIM PETKIEWICZ AND
ARTURO ORTEGA**
*Directors and Founders,
Community Links
International*

THE ACADEMIC WORLD IN THE UNITED STATES, AT ALL LEVELS, HAS TURNED ITS GAZE BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL CLASSROOM WALLS IN ORDER TO PUT OUR LEARNINGS, DREAMS AND BELIEFS INTO PRACTICAL, CONCRETE ACTION. THE IMMERSION PROGRAMS PROMOTED AROUND THE WORLD BY SUCH INSTITUTIONS ARE AN EXAMPLE OF THIS. In this essay we will focus our energies on our experiences with such programs in Oaxaca, Mexico where we have a combined 32 years of experience and run many such projects—including two each year for Santa Clara University—through our organization, Community Links International.

Those who arrive in Oaxaca with an open heart and a willingness to engage in personal excavations will have a profound experience due, mostly, to the depth of character and wisdom of the effervescent Oaxacan peoples and their strong and ageless culture.

What we strive for is to develop and evolve relationships of mutuality and impact. As indig-

enous leaders in the Sierra Sur coffee-producing region of Oaxaca recently said to a delegation: “It means so much to us that you have traveled so far to be with us in our community. We know now that we are not forgotten. Don’t leave us in forgotten isolation. And don’t forget about us when you travel back to your homes.”

“Full” participation in today’s globalized world demands of us an acceptance, implicit or explicit, of the viability of cultural homogenization. We find a plethora of options, all readily available on a daily basis, for casting our votes, dollar by dollar, for the shaping and molding of such a global village. Around the clock, every day of the year, we can purchase and consume fast foods of all kinds, soft drinks, pop music, celebrity magazines, Hollywood movies and television shows, clothing, cars, shoes and on and on in the endless buffet of material gorging. We are endlessly preached to about our most profound human quality, that of consumer. We navigate the same virtual world to infinity and beyond. English imposes itself as the dominant global language. Everything we do, even apathy and culpable ignorance, is political.

“Mother Earth is punishing us for the way we mistreat her and disrespect her. It’s urgent that we do something. All of us are called to action, since we’re all brothers and sisters, no matter what artificial borders separate us. It’s urgent that we act. Not just here in the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca, but where you’re from and all over the globe. Because what we do now is not for us, but for our children and their children and for the whole planet.”

—Indigenous leaders, addressing a recent Community Links International delegation from San Francisco.



“Child In Shack, La Chacra, 2004”

David Pace

Every single day in the U.S., elementary, middle, high school and university students, as well as citizens of all races and classes wake up ready to conquer the world equipped with the very latest in technological accoutrement—all designed especially for the individual of the 21st century—Ipods, laptops, cell phones, credit cards, PDA's and WiFi access to the Internet. Achieving sophistication means isolating ourselves from friends, professors, colleagues, neighbors and even family through the ubiquitous use of the aforementioned personal *electronica*. We can tell you where we'll be and what we'll be doing for months and months to come. The predominant belief is that a more focused and structured planning process will allow us to control the forces of nature, regulate time itself, prevent the unforeseen, and facilitate individual success.

This way of living incapacitates us.

Academic life, particularly at the university level, demands a decision-making process focused on the immediate. The seemingly endless demands of quizzes, papers, exams, grades, research, publishing, meetings, and conferences, tightly rein in the rhythms of our evolutionary clocks and hinder accessing those intimate places of deep silence and creative possibility.

The financial impact of life choices—from student debts acquired to choice of hopefully remunerative majors—fosters a consumer mentality even before studies are finished or careers begun. Consequently, committing the time and energy to pause and observe, to care about trying to understand a diverse and complex world, strikes us as antithetical to the dominant value system and becomes an unlikely option for most.

As Abraham Lincoln cautioned us years ago, "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew,

and act anew. We must disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our country."

By stepping outside of our comfort zones with the desire to strip ourselves metaphorically naked and challenge who we think we are affords us the opportunity to gain perspective on our cultural and consumer habits while also providing us the chance to judge our values, social realities, ethics, and economic predilections from differing world views.

Participants from all over the U.S. join us year-round in Oaxaca in order to begin relationships, join in a common struggle and participate in mostly indigenous efforts as widely varied as implementing reforestation; practicing pesticide-

free agriculture; fighting the intrusion of genetically-modified maize; producing organic, shade-grown and fair trade coffee; developing community-based health education with children and youth; building greenhouses, compost beds and organic family gardens; creating educational materials, artwork, and murals, and many other creative projects that give birth to life and possibility. But we must be way of carrying our own ideas of what needs to be done. Assisting in the organic processes begun by and carried on by the local population is the way we can best have an impact

that is of use to those who receive us. Putting ourselves in their situation helps us clarify the dangers. How would we feel if a group came into our lives and community, in Santa Clara or elsewhere, and began diagnosing our ills and trying to save us during a period of only one to three weeks?

We deprive ourselves of a sense of control because we become like babes when we enter into the unknown. And the individual is no longer all-powerful. In the best of circumstances the community steps into the void and protects us, nurtures us, guides us, and challenges us.

Our local reality of material gluttony directly

By stepping outside of our comfort zones with the desire to strip ourselves metaphorically naked and challenge who we think we are affords us the opportunity to gain perspective on our cultural and consumer habits while also providing us the chance to judge our values, social realities, ethics, and economic predilections from differing world views.

We cannot demand, nor hope, that they become like us because our lifestyle is based on the lie of excess. As six percent of the world's population we consume forty percent of the world's resources. Sustainable? Material privilege corrupts and blinds us. Experimenting with simple living in Oaxaca—as a first step toward radically altering our style of living—can help us to realize the fallacy of consumption that drives our “modern” culture.


relates to the want and scarcity of others. Instead of feeling grateful, lucky, or guilty we need to embody kinship. We cannot demand, nor hope, that they become like us because our lifestyle is based on the lie of excess. As six percent of the world's population we consume forty percent of the world's resources. Sustainable? Material privilege corrupts and blinds us. Experimenting with simple living in Oaxaca—as a first step toward radically altering our style of living – can help us to realize the fallacy of consumption that drives our “modern” culture. The wisdom of our ancestors found in archeological sites such as Monte Alban exposes to us vast stores of knowledge left to us for our benefit, if we choose to look at our world through different points of view. But, the hurried and harried life does not permit this. Only when we step back and breathe at a different beat can we begin to enjoy the beauty, honor the wisdom, and delve into the profundity of communal leisure that glorifies each and every day.

This is the moment of communion between the visiting delegations and the receiving communities in Oaxaca, the moment when we discover the treasure and richness of immersion programs. This is where hope percolates.

We cannot journey to places unknown and expect to carry the answers, especially if we have not even correctly formulated the questions about that which ails us. Encountering the other on his or her terms allows us to work together to formulate those very questions. Then, together, we evolve in a way previously unimagined by us. As La Virgen de Guadalupe met the peasant Juan Diego on his terms, in his geographical

place, in his dress, in his language, in his cultural *milieu*, so must we as immersion pilgrims aim to meet the Oaxacans in their spiritual space during our common journey.

As opposed to arriving as the conquering heroes, the great Santa Clauses from the North, or the efficient problem-solvers of a gung-ho society we must recognize the ignorance and incapacity of our individualism. Meeting the other on my terms leads to cheap charity. Meeting the other on their terms facilitates justice. As scary as this proposition may be, it is a necessary first step for freeing ourselves from binding presuppositions. From this act of trust in community we gain the ability to enter into relationships of equality and honor. At this moment, then, are we able to impact both the sending and receiving communities in transformative ways that validate all our efforts and desires.

If we learn to understand the reality and history of the destructive impact on the indigenous communities by centuries of influence of western cultures, first by the Spaniards and now by U.S.-led globalizing forces, then we realize, perhaps for the first time, that our hyperindividualistic and consumer society contributes to the submission and impoverishment of indigenous cultures in Oaxaca and around the globe. Therefore, the best action is that of raising our own awareness and consciousness about these processes and our participation in them. Consequently, we are called to create new ties with these communities and peoples based on justice, equality, solidarity, mutuality, peace and respect as men and women for, and with others. 

Teaching Immersion in the Developing World



BY EDWARD SCHAEFER

*Associate Professor, Department
of Mathematics and Computer
Science, Santa Clara University*

DURING THIS YEARLONG SABBATICAL, I AM TEACHING BOTH UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE LEVEL COURSES AT MZUZU UNIVERSITY IN MALAWI. THE ONLY AFRICAN COUNTRIES POORER THAN MALAWI ARE THREE THAT HAVE SPENT THE LAST DECADE IN CIVIL WAR. Last year there was a drought and the next harvest is months off. Most people have run out of last year's maize and we may be sliding into famine. It no longer surprises me to see listless babies with orange hair, bloated bellies, and scrawny limbs.

The educational system in Malawi is poor in every sense of the word. The most qualified teachers leave for higher paying positions in Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. Education leads to wealth, which enables more sexual partners. So the HIV rate among teachers is between 30 and 40 percent and teachers cannot be trained fast enough to replace those that are dying. It is common for a primary school class to have 200 students and meet under a tree. The majority of secondary school teachers have only

a secondary school diploma. Children often miss school because they are needed for farm work or their parents cannot afford school uniforms or fees. As a consequence, it is clear that my students, though innately bright, have not had their intellects exercised. They bring little with them into the classroom and I have to start from scratch. At SCU, I assume that every student has, at least sometimes, had good teachers at the secondary level, and learned something.

In Malawi, there is a strong oral tradition of story telling. One consequence is that most people are tremendous public speakers. Another is that there is almost no written literary tradition and even the professors have few books in their homes. There are three bookstores in the country—the closest is 225 miles from my university. The students simply cannot afford books. So we violate copyright laws by photocopying books. In addition, we have to keep in mind that students are often not even aware of how to use a book properly, since they are rarely used at the primary and secondary levels. The library has only a few shelves. Now I will have to

At SCU, I have been only slightly aware of the cultural contexts of our students. My immersion into Malawi, however, reminds me of the critical role of these contexts and the need to be sensitive to them. I hope to bring this sensitivity with me back to SCU.


wonder if there are students at SCU with similar backgrounds.

Books are not the only resource lacking here. The students have slow access to the Internet on weekdays, and often none at all. I have had to adapt my teaching to the lack of resources. The Malawian people are very patient and I have learned patience from them. It is a necessary attribute in this country. I have no problem posing a question in several ways over a period of five minutes or more until I get an answer out of my students. During my visit to the Bay Area over Christmas, I noticed that I had much more patience than before this sabbatical.

As a result of this experience, I have also developed a much greater awareness of the education that I am providing in the U.S. Here I am teaching courses that I also teach at SCU. At the request of the program, I have changed the order of topics in one two-term course and this changes how each topic is motivated. This has forced me to rethink the connections between topics. I already have an idea of how this will improve the similar courses I teach at home. I have also been asked to teach new topics in each course here, some of which I may introduce at SCU as well.

The needs, attitudes, goals, backgrounds, and abilities of the students are very different here in Malawi. These differences remind me of the variety of students and their needs.

At SCU, I have been focusing on the different learning styles of the students and how to address each one of those in the classroom. Here, my attention has been brought back to focus on bigger questions. Why are the students at the university and what are they hoping to accomplish? At SCU, with the seemingly homogeneous student population, I have lost track of that and have simply assumed that every student is at the university in order to get a job or go to graduate school and so can be treated similarly.

At SCU, I have been only slightly aware of the cultural contexts of our students. My immersion into Malawi, however, reminds me of the critical role of these contexts and the need to be sensitive to them. I hope to bring this sensitivity with me back to SCU. 

Note: To read a blog about my immersion experience, see www.kevinstrek.com/ed.



David Pace

"Line Of Boys, Fe Y Alegria, 2004"

Belonging to Each Other



BY MICHELLE MYERS

*Assistant Coordinator,
Kolvenbach Solidarity Program,
Ignatian Center
for Jesuit Education,
Santa Clara University*

A FIRST THERAPY SESSION AND THE INITIAL GROUP MEETING OF 10 TO 14 STUDENTS PREPARING FOR AN SCU STUDENT IMMERSION TRIP HAVE MUCH IN COMMON—ANXIETY AND WHAT PSYCHOANALYST THOMAS OGDEN REFERS TO AS THE CLIENT’S “CAUTIONARY TALES” (Ogden, p. 181). Clients and students directly or indirectly demand to know, “Where in the world *are* we going?” and “Will we know what to do when we get there?” Seeking therapy is a response to unbearable emotional pain, and student immersion trips are a response to what Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach has described as, “the sinful structures afflicting our world” (Kolvenbach, p. 9). As a soon-to-be graduate of Santa Clara University’s counseling psychology master’s program, working towards my license in marriage and family therapy, and as the assistant coordinator for the Ignatian Center’s Kolvenbach Solidarity Program, I have the privilege of walking with both students and survivors of family violence. Therapy and immersion trips share a great deal—both are journeys of faith.

In my own anxiety for our students’ basic safety and my desire for them to be enthusiastically and mindfully present to the local people we encounter on the immersion trips, I have at times been teasingly nick-named, “Mom.” Rather than shrinking from this role, I have found myself embracing it and, to my students’ chagrin, cheerfully and musically singing out on certain immersion trip mornings, “Good morning, kids! Let’s get ready to be present to the world and to each other!” On my last trip, one student sleepily, but shrewdly asked from the depths of her sleeping bag, “But, Michelle, who are we going to be present to today and when and where will that be happening?”


I feel called by a God of love to be present to the vulnerabilities of my clients and my students. Because of my privilege of constantly traveling to places poor in money yet rich in acceptance and faith, I am continually reminded that perhaps the best gift I have to offer my students and the world is the vulnerability of a faithful presence. For the last two years, our immersion in Oaxaca, Mexico, has included a stay at La Union Soyaltepec, a tiny Mixteca-speak-

As we have come to know those labeled “poor” in our trips to Mexico, Ecuador, San Francisco, and San Jose, we are continually astounded by their gifts of simplicity, faith, and resiliency in the face of hunger, poverty, and adversity. What remains most precious and feeds my faith is that on immersion, vulnerability is allowed. Vulnerability strips us of our pretenses, and what remains is a sense of belonging to each other.

ing indigenous community that has committed itself to the reforestation of its communal lands. Oaxaca is the second poorest state in Mexico, and seven out of 10 Oaxacans have departed to Mexico City or the U.S. in order to find work. About 15 indigenous languages are still spoken in Oaxaca, and although the state boasts of its cultural diversity, racism against indigenous peoples keeps Oaxaca oppressed.

Driving up curving mountain roads, and arriving at La Union, we were immediately greeted by La Union’s mayor, Don Eduardo* and the community leadership. They clearly stated to us that we were “in our home,” that we could return as many times as we would like, and that all they could offer us was work—on their communal reforestation project. Santa Clara University students have pruned hundreds of baby trees so they may grow stronger and taller. Walking out of the fields, on our way to another delicious meal, Don Eduardo joined us, talking about his family and his people. Seemingly tough-skinned under his cowboy hat, toting his machete, his teeth shining under his proud, black mustache, he softly confided to us that he was worried about the children—his own children who had gone to the U.S. to seek work, and the children of La Union. Tears fell down his cheeks as he spoke, apologetically and vulnerably. He explained that when the few children of La Union were not in school they would help in the care of the trees. Don Eduardo whispered to us that he had not even candy to give the children after all of their hard work. I believe that seeing the SCU students conjured a great yearning for his own children. His inability to save his disappearing

Mixteca culture rang clear as he was finally given the opportunity to speak with outsiders about his sense of loss. This was a sacred moment for me. I felt honored that he had the courage to confide in our group and that we could be with him in his pain—it was transformative for both the students and for Don Eduardo as he risked sharing his feelings. I remain in awe of the faith it took for him and his community to welcome us onto their homeland and the faith of the students to listen with present hearts, leaving behind the arrogance of solution-based responses.

As a number of SCU students and I have come to know those labeled “poor” in our trips to Mexico, Ecuador, San Francisco, and San Jose, we are continually astounded by their gifts of simplicity, faith, and resiliency in the face of hunger, poverty, and adversity. What remains most precious and feeds my faith is that on immersion, vulnerability is allowed. Vulnerability strips us of our pretenses, and what remains is a sense of belonging to each other, of breaking bread with each other—we laugh and cry as companions in faith. 

**Name changed for confidentiality.*

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Crossing the Tracks



BY SHAWNA O'DAY
BABULA '01, M.ED. '02

It started with the voices of angels. I found the perfect summer job prior to senior year: a non-profit agency that exposed middle school students to community service. Each morning I drove a small school bus through the neatly landscaped neighborhoods of Palo Alto to pick up my day-campers. Then I literally crossed the tracks to East Palo Alto (EPA) for the remaining campers.

I spent the summer bringing children from both communities together through community service, and my curiosity about this area grew. A fellow camp leader from Stanford passionately described an “alternative spring break” program that had exposed her to issues facing EPA, and I listened with wonder. I recalled my own alternative break in Tijuana—and questioned if it was time for Santa Clara University to look closer to home when approaching immersion experiences.

The last day of camp hit me harder than I ever expected. As I wove my van through the neighborhoods, my campers sang in the back. It was a blend of Palo Alto and East Palo Alto, a mixture of races and backgrounds, all singing in perfect pre-pubescent harmony. They were the voices of angels. Tears were streaming down my cheeks as I pulled up to the driveways and said goodbye. Their friendship, their harmony, and their deep trust in each other touched me. I had to share the struggles and beautiful story of EPA with my college peers. I returned to SCU and applied for a grant from the Bannan Institute.


For the first year of this project, I modeled what my colleague at Stanford had done, rather than start from scratch. As our immersion itinerary came together I was feeling proud of my noble intentions... Then I made the call. I phoned a resident of EPA hoping to speak with her during our immersion. Her hot, dizzy words assaulted me through the phone. I hung up,

horrified, and later sat numbly before my advisor, trying to make sense of what I had done. I was about to bring a group of strangers into her community, her home, and *analyze* her. I was treating her community like a petri dish where we would study all these interesting social issues for one week. No wonder she told me off.

I nervously began our local alternative spring break with three other students, uncertain how we would be received. Our small group painted a pre-school classroom, ate dinner with a police officer, sorted donated clothing to pay our room and board, listened to a battered women's group, observed a nun teaching English to a group of adults, and on and on. It was an exhausting but exhilarating week. We packed at least three events into each day, and despite our fatigue we

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talked long into the night, a group of college girls, ourselves from strikingly different backgrounds. It is hard to capture in words the bond that connected us that week, and at the same time the tension that turned us uncomfortably into ourselves as our own socioeconomic backgrounds impacted our words and judgments. There were fits of giggling at 2 a.m. as we made connections that never normally would bring us together at Santa Clara, and reflective silences as the scope of these social issues bowled us over.

I am glad to hear that the EPA immersion program has morphed into a more local and *consistent* connection with the community. I am glad it has expanded beyond four people, and I hope the legacy of humbled reflection and service continues. And finally, I am so glad the voices of these angels stay with me. I teach today in an at-risk high school outside of Denver. My students' beautiful, sheer determination still brings me to tears mixed with joy and agony at society's injustices. 

Beyond the Material



BY BETHANY FESKE '05

Children playing soccer.
Stray dogs scavenging for
food. Banana plantations.
Squatter communities.
Packed churches. These


are the images that come to mind when I recall my Immersion trip in Duran, Ecuador, this past summer. When I reflect on these visions, I am reminded of the lessons that have remained with me since my return to the United States.

Living in solidarity with the people of Duran for a mere eleven days taught me that most Ecuadorians are not accustomed to extravagant things. I quickly realized that the amenities I often consider necessary for existence are nothing more than what their name connotes: things. These lifeless objects we all surround ourselves with often become an integral part of our identity as citizens of the wealthiest country in the world. We are not measured solely by our abilities, but rather by the car we drive, the house we live in, and the salary we earn. This devotion to all things material is absent in Duran.

The people of Duran demonstrate what it means to live in spite of the material, rather than in pursuit of it. They live in tight quarters and often rely on their own two feet for reliable transportation. Yet from what initially appears to be a bleak living situation emerges a community rich in ubiquitous assets, namely a steadfast dedication to family and faith. Every individual

I encountered, either in extended conversation or brief interchange, demonstrated the centrality of loved ones and God in their lives. One man in particular, Gabriel, took it upon himself to convey the necessity of a stable household. He covered the bases, from finding a suitable spouse to teaching important lessons to your children that will be passed on to subsequent generations. Gabriel and others in the community often discussed the importance of a resolute faith. This commitment was evident in the church at Sunday night mass, where people filled the pews out of reverence to their provider and source of strength.

The lessons I learned about family and faith have inspired an ongoing evaluation of what I value in life. I ask myself "How do I define my identity?" When the answer pertains to my material surroundings I am challenged to consider the importance of the intangible in my life. I recognize that who I am is contingent on my attitude and priorities. Keeping this in mind, I aspire to be someone who experiences the pure joy of a child in a heated soccer match, empathizes for those who are forced to scavenge for food in the gutters, and strives to understand the forces that contribute to labor exploitation on the banana plantations as well as inadequate health conditions in transitory living arrangements.

My immersion experience helped me realize that my faith is only as strong as my commitment to addressing social injustices. I am able to be an engaged member of the world community when I seek out my role in appeasing the inequity that compromises human dignity around the globe. The people I encountered in Ecuador helped me to see the world, and my role in it, more clearly than ever. 

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48 Hours



BY KATIE ROBERTS '05

MY COLLEGE CAREER CAN BE ENCAPSULATED IN ONE WORD: “CHANGE.” LIKE MOST UNDERGRADUATES, OVER THE COURSE OF FOUR YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN VERY LITTLE ABOUT ME THAT HAS NOT CHANGED, OR AT LEAST BEEN CHALLENGED, IN SOME WAY. However, there are a few times in one’s life when something so drastic occurs that life afterwards can be only a reflection of what it once was. The 48 hours I spent on an immersion trip in San Jose was one such experience.

The entire weekend was a whirlwind of interactions with various types of people—most of which surprised me in a multitude of ways. In fall 2003, with seven of my fellow sophomores from the Communitas Residential Learning Community, I was immersed in the poorer side of what is, essentially, Santa Clara University’s backyard. We met with representatives of PACT, an organization that interviews local residents to determine their greatest needs, and then uses church funds to fulfill those needs. Sacred Heart Nativity School, a boys-only Catholic middle school, showed me the passion and dedication its teachers have for the underprivileged San Jose youth who are their students. I was so touched by the encouragement offered to these young men that I decided to volunteer there for several quarters afterwards.

An SCU alumnus in the City and County Building illustrated for us the horrific housing shortage in the city. I was appalled at the pov-

erty just down the road from me. SCU never seemed more like a bubble. We were shown a community center available for homeless residents and toured Downtown College Prep, a high school giving drop-outs a second chance at going to college. Our group also had the opportunity to speak with a policeman on his local beat. He introduced us to several prostitutes and known drug runners, commenting that their plight could never change. I was saddened by his cynical attitude towards the homeless population, though the optimism shown by others far outshone his negativity.

By far the most challenging and life-altering aspect of the trip for all of us was the night we spent in the Emergency Housing Consortium. After checking in, we all spoke with different residents over dinner and throughout the evening. To hear their stories was heart-wrenching,

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uplifting, and terrifying all at once. I realized how much in common I had with these people—just a few twists of bad luck and I could easily end up sharing the shelter with them. I was also astounded by the deep, steady faith each person seemed to possess. The most overwhelming moment came when a homeless man asked how he could pray for *me*—even though *he* was the one without a home.

Upon my return to Santa Clara, I viewed my life in a way vastly different from that of 48 hours earlier. I went through my closet, donating clothes I didn’t need. I contacted many old friends for the first time in a long time. And I prayed—for those I had met in the shelter and for those I hadn’t. The San Jose immersion trip changed the way I look at the world. It truly made me see the world with new eyes, even if that world is only right down the street. **e**

Bannan Institute Grant Report

Fostering Collaboration with Central America in Sustainable Development

BY JORGE E. GONZÁLEZ-CRUZ

*Professor and David Packard Scholar,
Department of Mechanical Engineering,
Santa Clara University*

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS A NECESSARY PRACTICE FOR PROMOTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ACROSS THE WORLD. Although the concepts of sustainability have not yet permeated design and decision-making within the engineering disciplines, many faculty members within the Santa Clara University School of Engineering recognize the potential benefit (and inevitability) of incorporating the principles of sustainability in serving the needs of humanity. Particularly necessary is the implementation of these practices in the developing world to accommodate their fast economic growth while protecting their immediate ecosystems. To this end, SCU's engineering school, with the support of the Bannan Institute and the Center for Multicultural Learning has initiated cooperation with Central American institutions with the intention of developing methods to implement sustainable engineering practices serving societal needs.

Joint activities include workshops to review on-going practices for implementing sustain-

able engineering methods, community-based learning projects in which students identify needs of the communities and suggest sustainable engineering alternatives, distance learning, collaboration among faculty members and both governmental and non-government organizations to find sustainable alternatives to identified problems, and identifying international resources to implement solutions to problems of highest priority.

These activities are paving the way for methodologies to identify needs and present sustainable solutions from an academic perspective that includes all stakeholders including the communities, scholars, students, and national and international organizations.

Sustainability as a means to project social justice

Sustainability is defined as the efficient use of resources to meet present needs without sacrificing the needs of future generations. Sustainability is reflected in the efficient use of space, the use of resources for making goods, and for minimizing the environmental impacts of social and economic activity.

Thus, research and education in sustainable development practices is a global necessity as large portions of the world are developing

infrastructure, and a significant portion of the developed world requires reconstruction to replace current processes and infrastructure with more sustainable alternatives.

SCU's engineering school is a perfect platform for infusing technological capabilities and practices for sustainable development. The school embodies the Jesuit educational philosophy of educating the whole person, and thereby seeks to engage students in the practice of social justice and compassion, particularly for the underserved. Engineering faculty members in related fields are encouraged to engage in scholarly activities associated with sustainability. A group of engineering faculty at SCU has recently engaged in a collaborative effort with Universidad Centro Americana (UCA) to promote sustainable development in Central America as a means to promote social justice in the region.

UCA is a Jesuit-based university located in San Salvador, El Salvador, with a strong tradition of social involvement for the benefit of the underserved. UCA played a major role in ending the civil war of the '70s and '80s, and the school is now focusing on the reconstruction of civil society. To this end, UCA's engineering school is promoting sustainable development among students and faculty with focus on the

local communities. Central American countries, in particular, present major challenges for sustainable development practices given the great need to improve their physical and economic infrastructures and given the sensitivity of their ecosystems to potential human-induced changes.

ACTIVITIES BETWEEN SCU AND UCA

Joint Workshop

The first major activity of the SCU/UCA collaboration was a joint workshop held at UCA in August 2004. This workshop included a comprehensive review of sustainable engineering methods and practices in the following topics: energy, water resources, and disaster-resistant structures, transportation and environmental monitoring (enviro-informatics). Follow up activities from this workshop have included identification and execution of engineering senior design projects, collaborative courses between SCU and UCA via distance learning, collaborative research projects among faculty from several institutions, and a two-way traffic of students and faculty members between SCU and UCA.



Students involved in the SCU/UCA collaboration developed an award-winning design for an improved human-powered utility vehicle. At left, a street vendor in El Salvador with the old version. At right, Daniel Pitt, dean of the SCU School of Engineering, demonstrates the new design.

SCU engineering students appreciate the opportunity of impacting the lives of others through their senior design experiences, and are rapidly engaging in sustainable engineering projects....The collaborative engineering senior design projects centered on sustainability and with an international component have proven to be a unique experience within engineering education.

More than 30 faculty members, students, and representatives of the following organizations participated in this workshop:

- Universidad Centro Americana José Simeón Cañas
- Santa Clara University
- Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
- Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
- United Nations Development Program
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- U.S. Peace Corps
- Interamerican Development Bank

The main outcome of the workshop was a comprehensive list of potential projects and opportunities in sustainable engineering in which academic institutions could collaborate and have a significant societal impact. The projects were classified in the following discipline-specific topics: air quality and monitoring, building construction, education, energy, transportation, and water sanitation.

Senior Design Projects

Engineering Senior Design Projects have been initiated after the first joint meeting in El Salvador involving more than 40 engineering students from SCU, and several faculty members from the schools represented. Each project involves a small group of senior engineering students supervised by one or more faculty. The projects respond to specific needs of the communities (of El Salvador in this case), and are providing unique opportunities for students and faculty to interact with and learn from members of the communities, while adapting their engineer-

ing training to present sustainable solutions to real life problems. Some of the projects are sponsored by international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

SCU engineering students appreciate the opportunity of impacting the lives of others through their senior design experiences, and are rapidly engaging in sustainable engineering projects. The first example is the trio of SCU students who joined the faculty for the first workshop in El Salvador who immediately signed on to work in related projects upon their return. Many other students enthusiastically expressed their desires to be part of this experience.

The collaborative engineering senior design projects centered on sustainability and with an international component have proven to be a unique experience within engineering education. Our experience was recently shared at the International Congress of Mechanical Engineers [4]. See note at end.

Distance Teaching/Learning Program

To facilitate and maintain close communication between SCU and UCA engineering schools, a distance learning/teaching program has been initiated. Two equivalent videoconference facilities were installed, one at each institution, to allow meetings between students, faculty, and members of the communities where the senior design projects are taking place. The facilities have also enabled SCU students and faculty to increase residence time in El Salvador. Some regular engineering courses at SCU are now broadcast directly to and from UCA allowing students and faculty to attend or teach their regular courses while in El Salvador. UCA students are joining

SCU students and faculty appreciate the opportunity to channel their efforts into projects that will have immediate social impact, benefiting from UCA's experience and strong tradition of practicing social justice in El Salvador.


SCU students for regular courses being offered at SCU. Courses such as Fundamentals of Aerospace Engineering and Heat Transfer have been offered to both groups of students since the facilities were first installed in the winter of 2005.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The fact that the students involved in the SCU/UCA collaboration tailor their engineering designs to directly benefit the underserved has not hindered the quality of their projects. Rather, this has enhanced their learning experiences. Some of their designs have received the highest awards in national competitions, as was the case for the team that developed the human powered utility vehicle for villages in El Salvador during the 2004-2005 school year. The most recent story includes five senior mechanical engineering students who are designing and constructing an underwater autonomous vehicle to monitor the water quality in the Lempa river, the country's main source of fresh water. These students spent half of their fall 2005 quarter in El Salvador working with UCA faculty and members of local communities, adjusting their design to the specific needs of the people. The students maintained the same curriculum as their classmates, thanks to the distance learning equipment now available at SCU and UCA. The academics of this group were not negatively affected by this experience, as they all performed at the same, or higher, levels as their classmates. They are now preparing to complete their system, test it, and deliver it to their customers.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE ACTIONS

This initial collaboration between SCU and UCA in El Salvador under the umbrella of

sustainable engineering practices has been a very important initial step in promoting conscience, compassion, and community-based learning within the engineering educational framework at SCU. The collaboration is clearly beneficial to both schools. On one hand, SCU students and faculty appreciate the opportunity to channel their efforts into projects that will have immediate social impact, benefiting from UCA's experience and strong tradition of practicing social justice in El Salvador. The experience gained through this collaboration is providing the faculty members involved with further opportunities for scholarship while strengthening the aspiration of the school of engineering of making sustainable development an integral component of our curriculum. On the other hand, UCA students and faculty benefit from the updated knowledge and practice in state-of-the art topics and technologies residing within SCU. The fact that a valuable cultural exchange and flow of ideas is taking place adds a less tangible, but equally valuable bonus to these initial steps. 

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coming events

More to Explore

MAY 16, 12 NOON TO 1 P.M.

Benson Center, Campus Ministry Conference Room

Join authors from this issue of *explore* to further discuss immersion. Panelists will include Luis Calero, S.J., Sonny Manuel, S.J., Catherine Wolff, Michelle Myers, and Katie Roberts. ☐

Santa Clara Lecture



Newman and the Restoration of the Interpersonal in Higher Education

LECTURE BY MICHAEL J. BUCKLEY, S.J.

NOV. 14, 2006, 7:30 P.M.

Williman Room, Benson Memorial Center

Michael J. Buckley, S.J. is the incoming Augustine Cardinal Bea, S.J., Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University, and for the past several years has served as the University Professor of Theology at Boston College. He is author of numerous articles and several books including *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* and *The Catholic University as Promise and Project: Reflections in a Jesuit Idiom*. He is past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and a recipient of the John Courtney Murray Award for excellence in theology. He serves on the Board of Visitors of Harvard Divinity School and is a Fellow of Clare College at Cambridge University. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Gonzaga University, a Ph.L. from Pontifical Faculty at St. Michael's, an S.T.L. from Pontifical Faculty of Alma College, an S.T.M. from University of Santa Clara, and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. ☐

Save the Date Conference on Community-Based Learning

SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

MARCH 15 – 17, 2007

For more information, visit www.scu.edu/ignatiancenter/cblconf ☐

next issue

FALL 2006

The Ignatian tradition at Santa Clara University

In our next issue we will help celebrate Jubilee 2006 (which commemorates the death of Ignatius in 1556 and the births of Francis Xavier and Peter Favre in 1506) by exploring how the Ignatian tradition influences the contemporary life of Santa Clara University. Members of our community will write about how the Ignatian tradition interacts with the other influences on SCU, such as the Franciscan influence and the influence of Silicon Valley. We will also examine the specific habits of mind that we find in the Ignatian tradition and how we see them reflected in our contemporary expression of Ignatian tradition at SCU.

A Prayer to the U.S.

I am witnessing in your eyes
the ocean of your fear.
No, I am not responding
to your words of death and destruction.

I am offering myself naked.
Take the flesh and the skin of my body.
Like holy bread
put it in your mouth now
and I'll smile inside of your fear.

I am witnessing in your actions
the fire of your anger.
No, I am not responding to your actions
with my own anger and fear.

I am offering you the truth of my ancestors
living still in the trees and the mountains.
Like a sacred seed,
swallow it all now.
The soul of my land
will be born in your heart.
I'll sing forever to your anger
and transform into fresh rivers
the ocean of your fear.

BY JUAN VELASCO,
*Associate Professor, Department of English,
Santa Clara University*

"Vladimir, 2004" by David Pace



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